

# **Improving Student Learning at Scale:**

## **An Interim Report to the National Governor's Association from Washington State**

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## MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS TO DATE

Since receiving the grant in September, the Washington State team has met four times and has made substantial progress on the activities outlined in the work plan. The team has identified three issue areas of high importance relating to the implementation of Common Core and developed a specific work plan for each one. Team partner organizations have shared ideas and divided up the work on each area.

The three topics of focus are:

- Dual credit
- High School and Beyond Plan
- High school transition courses

### Dual-Credit Courses

*Goal: Streamline and expand dual-credit enrollment to ensure equitable opportunities for all high school students.*

Dual-credit programs offer high school students the opportunity to earn college credit in addition to high school credit. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) identified streamlining dual credit as a priority in the 2013 Roadmap. WSAC has formed a dual-credit work group that includes a wide range of representatives from both the K-12 system and postsecondary education. The purpose of the work group is to recommend legislative language to create a dual-enrollment/dual-credit system meeting the criteria described in the Roadmap:

- Provide clear information about each option in ways that empower high school students to choose the option best suited to their goals and schedules.
- Provide low-cost options for high school students and their families.
- Ensure adequate funding for high schools and postsecondary institutions to maintain high-quality options.
- Increase the availability of all options to more high school students.
- Streamline processes for obtaining postsecondary credit.

Creating this streamlined system will increase high school student enrollment in dual-credit courses, increase the amount of college credit awarded to high school students, and increase diversity in the student enrollment in dual-credit courses to reflect local demographics.

The work group will review existing policies and practices relating to dual credit and will make recommendations by mid-fall of 2014.

## High School and Beyond Plan

*Goal: Enhance and strengthen the High School and Beyond Plan in Washington State, thus ensuring it is meaningful to students. Use the High School and Beyond Plan to support the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS).*

The State Board of Education (SBE) is responsible for establishing high school graduation requirements, one of which is the High School and Beyond Plan. The High School and Beyond Plan is “a formal process designed to help students think about their future and select coursework that will best prepare them for their post high school goals.” An issue is the High School and Beyond Plan is not utilized to the extent that it could be. SBE is currently exploring options to improve the High School and Beyond Plan and incorporate technology so it can be more accessible to students and their families.

## High School Transition Courses

*Goal: Determine use of Smarter Balanced Assessment to inform 12th grade coursework, including developing 12th grade transition courses for students not quite prepared for college-level work.*

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) convenes the Core to College work group, which has released a draft set of recommendations for use of the Smarter Balanced 11th Grade Assessment. The recommendations include exemptions from college-level remediation for specific scores, and advising recommendations for dual credit, next-in-sequence courses, and transition courses. These recommendations are being vetted through education system groups and faculty this spring. We are hopeful that we will have consensus on acceptance of the recommendations in late spring, or by fall at the latest.

One component of these recommendations is to design high school transition courses through partnership between postsecondary education institutions and school districts. These transition courses will support students who are not quite ready for college-level work, and therefore reduce the need for students to take remedial coursework in college. Drafts of both a 12th grade mathematics transition course and a 12th grade English language arts transition course have been developed. These transition courses will be piloted in fall 2014.

As demonstrated above, there are many efforts relating to the implementation of Common Core in Washington State. One of the objectives of this grant is to connect these efforts and build off of what is already in place. Team members were asked to identify current efforts of their agencies or organizations relating to Common Core. From this information, a project matrix of all efforts currently under way around Common Core implementation was created. Identifying these has not only been a helpful visualization, but also is the first step in coordinating and building off of existing work.

Team meetings have had high attendance and active participation. The Washington State team was initially composed of seven members and has now expanded to a team of more than twenty individuals from a variety of educational agencies, organizations, and institutions (see Appendix). Bringing in this external group of stakeholders has provided diverse perspectives on issues and strategies.

In order to facilitate communication and keep team members updated on progress of the ISLS group, WSAC has created a Wiki site ([www.improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com](http://www.improvingstudentlearningatscale.wikispaces.com)) where news, meeting materials and notes, schedules, and other important documents and resources are posted. This tool has served as an internal communication piece between and among team members.

## **IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS**

The work group will continue to make progress on the initiatives outlined above. In addition, we will begin work on three related areas:

### **Communications (Messaging on Use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment)**

As the secondary and postsecondary sectors come to agreement on the use of the Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessment to exempt students from remediation at the college level, providing accurate and meaningful information to parents, students, and educators will be critical. We plan on using strategic messaging to provide more information to the public, specifically targeted at the following groups:

1. Students and parents
2. K-12 educators, counselors, and other staff
3. Postsecondary faculty and advisors

If stakeholders are more informed about how the Smarter Balanced Assessment relates to high school and college coursework, information will be communicated more effectively between all parties and students can make better decisions on what coursework to take in high school.

### **Ready, Set, Grad**

Ready, Set, Grad (ReadySetGrad.org) is WSAC's existing website directed at providing outreach and information to parents and students. Work will begin shortly to add a tool to the Ready, Set, Grad website that would give students the ability to see how their dual-credit coursework would count at Washington higher education institutions. This would give students the ability to make more informed choices when selecting dual-credit coursework. One of our focus areas, mentioned above, is to streamline dual credit, making it more accessible for students. Because every institution has different policies and course equivalencies relating to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Cambridge, it can be difficult for students to understand how the dual-credit courses they take in high school relate to college credit. To ameliorate this, we are building a dual-credit search tool on the Ready, Set, Grad website.

With this search tool, students will be able to enter their dual-credit coursework and see what college credit they will receive at different higher education institutions. This will bare students the burden of having to go individually to each schools' websites to get this information. Work will begin shortly to add this tool to our Ready Set Grad website.

## **Ready WA**

Strengthening the connection of the ISLS group members' efforts to Partnership for Learning's ReadyWA campaign is important to ensure that messaging is aligned on marketing Common Core to all Washingtonians. We are currently working with ReadyWA and Partnership for Learning to collaborate on strategies messaging on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND SETBACKS**

There is a tremendous amount of activity going on around Common Core implementation in Washington State. The ISLS grant has provided an opportunity to connect the various agencies and partners working on implementation of Common Core and begin to leverage our various efforts in a more effective way. Washington is a decentralized state in terms of education governance and leadership; the ISLS cross-agency communication and collaboration have been extraordinarily valuable to ensure that efforts are not duplicated and have put everyone on the same page.

However, there is a challenge in the sense that, even though the intent of ISLS is to coordinate efforts, ISLS does create yet another effort in itself. We have been working hard to clarify what our role is amidst the work that is already being done.

We also face a challenge in the number of high-level policymakers who are part of this team. Although having so many key players and policymakers at the table has been valuable, it can be difficult to get these folks together, primarily because of schedule constraints and other competing responsibilities of the team members. Scheduling in-state team meetings for so many heads of agencies has been challenging; coordinating schedules to ensure adequate attendance at the cross-state meetings has been even more difficult, particularly with short notice. To reduce the impact of the scheduling problems, one or two individuals from each agency serve as a 'back-up' for the state team leads. This has helped ensure that each sector is represented; however, variation in participants reduces the level of cohesive and ongoing dialogue.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Since the state team began meetings, a few things have quickly become apparent. The first is that there is a sustained need for collaboration among education agencies and organizations in Washington. Often, agencies are focused on specific tasks or projects that are relevant to a single educational sector, to the point of working in isolation and without cross-sector alignment. Regular cross-sector meetings and ongoing dialogue can reduce this segregation of efforts by building and maintaining trust and increasing collaboration.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

The technical assistance needs of the team include research, facilitation, and resource-sharing. For example, Kate Nielson from the NGA has provided a great service by mining websites, reports, and publications to find legislation, policy examples, and other news related to Common Core, providing the team with national resources and comparisons. It is helpful to identify the policies and practices that have been successful in other states, and it is also helpful to learn from unsuccessful practices.

It has also been helpful, on occasion, to have a person from outside the partner agencies facilitate meetings, bringing a fresh perspective to issues without any perceived bias. Kate has facilitated a few of our meetings, and her skills in guiding the conversation, helping the group stay focused, and ensuring the group's meeting goals were very valuable.

### EXPENSES TO DATE

Cost Category	Total Budget	Actual to Date
Meeting Expenses	\$7,000	\$1,439.65
Travel Expenses	\$3,000	\$148.24
Staff (formerly Contractual)	\$45,000	\$8,705.39
Other Expenses (Web Design)	\$10,000	\$9,000- \$11,000 (Projected)
Optional Communications Funds	\$10,000	\$0
Total	\$75,000	\$19,293.28- \$21,293.28

Up to this point, our expenses haven't been quite as much as we originally projected. We have been fortunate enough to secure some meeting facilities at little or no cost. The meeting funds have been primarily for catering all-day retreats.

The contractual category we are mainly using for staff salary, which we discussed with Kate Nielson. Anne Messerly works in our policy division and provides support in coordinating ISLS efforts. She also assists in various dual-credit analyses and research.

Our "other expenses" category is dedicated to building a dual-credit search tool, as mentioned in the Immediate Next Steps section of the report. Although this has not hit our budget yet, we are in the process of building it and project the cost to be between \$9,000 and \$11,000.

We plan to use our optional \$10,000 communications funds to produce strategic messaging on the use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment. We will do this in collaboration with ReadyWA and other ISLS team member organizations.

## **AUTHOR CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## APPENDIX

### PRIMARY TEAM MEMBERS

Name	Organization	Position
<b>Ben Rarick</b>	State Board for Education	Executive Director
<b>Gene Sharratt</b>	Washington Student Achievement Council	Executive Director
<b>Larry Seaquist</b>	Washington State Legislature	Representative, 26th Legislative District
<b>Marcie Maxwell</b>	Governor's Office	Senior Education Policy Advisor
<b>Marty Brown</b>	State Board for Community & Technical Colleges	Executive Director
<b>Paul Francis</b>	Council of Presidents	Executive Director
<b>Randy Dorn</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Superintendent

### ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERS

Name	Organization	Position
<b>Alan Burke</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Deputy Superintendent
<b>Bill Moore</b>	State Board for Community & Technical Colleges	Director, Core to College Alignment
<b>Chris Reykdal</b>	Washington State Legislature	Representative, 22nd Legislative District
<b>Eleni Papadakis</b>	Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board	Executive Director
<b>Gary Kipp</b>	Association of Washington School Principals	Executive Director
<b>Jan Yoshiwara</b>	State Board for Community & Technical Colleges	Deputy Director
<b>Jana Carlisle</b>	Partnership for Learning	Executive Director
<b>Jane Sherman</b>	Council of Presidents	Associate Director for Academic Policy
<b>Jennifer Wallace</b>	Professional Educator Standards Board	Executive Director
<b>Justin Montermini</b>	Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board	Policy Analyst
<b>Mike Hubert</b>	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Director, Guidance & Counseling
<b>Rai Nauman Mumtaz</b>	Washington Student Achievement Council	Council Member

**ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERS, CONT.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>Randy Spaulding</b>	Washington Student Achievement Council	Director of Academic Affairs and Policy
<b>Sandi Everlove</b>	Washington STEM	Chief Learning Officer
<b>Sean Agriss</b>	Eastern Washington University	Assistant Professor/Director of Secondary Education
<b>Violet Boyer</b>	Independent Colleges of Washington	President/CEO

**STAFF**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>Anne Messerly</b>	Washington Student Achievement Council	Policy Associate
<b>Kate Nielson</b>	National Governor's Association	Policy Analyst
<b>Noreen Light</b>	Washington Student Achievement Council	Associate Director of Academic Affairs and Policy